

III

SWAMI: Oh! When did you arrive? You were not visible anywhere outside. Are you well?

Bhaktha: 'Tis two days since I came. I see here number of people everywhere outside. I hear the incessant confusion of voices. Coming from my place to avoid that confusion, I find here too crowds everywhere. Therefore, I entered inside. There, it is fine, blissful, quiet. That is why I was in the Hall inside. It is as quiet inside as it is restless outside.

Swami: What is special in this? It is natural. Where there is jaggery, there gather the ants—and between outside and inside, this is the distinction! That is the characteristic. That is how it is.

Bhaktha: Swami! I do not understand what You say. If You tell me in detail, I shall listen and be happy.

Swami: You yourself said, didn't you, that there is an outside and an inside. Well. Those are what we call "*Bahyaprapancham*" and "*Antharaprapancham*," the external world and the internal world. Now, which is the internal? Give me your idea.

Bhaktha: You want it to come from my mouth itself? It would be so good if You speak.

Swami: Well. Making the questioner himself give out the answers is the *Sanathana* (Timeless) method of teaching. If those who question, themselves give the answers, they would clearly understand the subject. The lecturing style is different. In olden days, all the Rishis enabled their disciples to understand Vedantha only by this method. So, come on! Speak! Let us see.

Bhaktha: Do you ask me to speak of the objects I have seen with the eye?

Swami: Not only the eye. Tell me all that you have experienced and known through all the senses of cognition, the eye, the ear, etc.

Bhaktha: Earth, sky, water, sun, moon, wind, fire, stars, dusk, mountains, hills, trees, rivers, women, men, children, old persons, animals, birds, coldness, heat, the happy, the miserable, fishes, insects, diseases—like these I have seen many.

Swami: Enough, enough, that's enough! This is the *Prapancha* (Universe composed of five elements). Did you see it only today? Did it exist yesterday? Will it exist tomorrow?

Bhaktha: Why do you ask me so, Swami? It has existed like this for ages isn't it? Who knows for how long it will exist, or since how long it has existed?

Swami: "Since how long it has existed!", you said isn't it? That is what we speak of as "*Anadi*," Beginningless. This external world is beginningless. When there is "external," there must be "internal" also, is it not? Well, have you ever seen a cinema?

Bhaktha: Ever seen! Why, Swami, the cinema too is a part of the *Prapancham*, isn't it? I have seen many.

Swami: What did you see? Tell me.

Bhaktha: I have seen many wonderful "pictures"; I have heard numerous experiences of joy and sorrow.

Swami: "I have seen," you say. The screen is one; the "picture" is another. Did you see both?

Bhaktha: Yes.

Swami: Did you see the screen and the "picture" both at the same time?

Bhaktha: How is that possible, Swami? When the pictures are seen, the screen is not visible. When the screen is visible, the pictures are not seen.

Swami: Right! The screen, the pictures, do they exist always?

Bhaktha: No. The screen is permanent; the pictures come and go.

Swami: As you say, the screen is permanent and the pictures come and go. For this "permanent," and "impermanent" we use the words, *Sthiram* (permanent) and *Asthiram* (impermanent), *Nithyam* (indestructible) and *Anithyam* (temporary), *Ksharam* (changing) and *Aksharam* (unchanging). I shall ask on another subject: Does the picture fall on the screen or the screen fall on the picture? Which is the basis for what?

Bhaktha: The pictures fall on the screen; so, for the picture, the screen is the basis.

Swami: So too, the external world which is like the picture has no permanence; it changes. The internal world is fixed; it does not change. The external has the internal as its basis, its substratum.

Bhaktha: But Swami! I heard you say *Ksharam-Aksharam*, *Nithyam-Anithyam*.

Swami: Yes, my boy! You were speaking now of pictures; do these have names and forms?

Bhaktha: Haven't they? 'Tis only because they have names and forms that the story is understood. Then only do

we recollect Ramayana and Bharatham. There is no formless name and nameless form.

Swami: Good! That is well said! Where there is form there must be name. Where there is name, there must be form. Both these are connected with each other. When we say, “*Avinaabhaava Sambandha*,” (inseparable connection) it is to this relationship that we refer. Have you understood now the meaning of “prapancham”?

Bhaktha: I have grasped that it is identified with name and form, but Swami, I would like to hear you describe how it originated.

Swami: You should not fall into the tangle now. If we engage ourselves in describing that, it would be like getting into a mango garden and without eating the fruit we have plucked, calculating the number of trees in the garden, the number of twigs on each branch, the number of fruits on each twig, and what the total price of all the mangoes would be if the price of one mango is so much. Instead of senselessly wasting precious time in the collection of this information, we should, like the person who eats the fruit, find out what is of primary importance; and understanding that thing first, attain contentment and joy. Leave that alone. What did you say is the nature of this Prapancham? This Prapancham has another name too, do you know?

Bhaktha: I said that the Prapancham is identified with name and form. I have heard that it is known by another name, *Jagath* (moving, changing world).

Swami: This *Nama-Roopa* (name-form) Prapancham, this *Jagath* is like *Indrajala* or magician’s work, real only as long as you see it. So too the world is real only so long as you experience with your *Indriyas* or senses. That is to say, anything not experienced in the wakeful stage is taken as non-existent. Under such circumstances, we say “*Sath*” for existence and “*Asath*” for non-existence. Therefore, what do you say of this world? Is it “*Sath*” or “*Asath*”?

Bhaktha: It exists in experience in the wakeful stage, and so it is “*Sath*”; it does not exist in the deep sleep stage and so it is “*Asath*.”

Swami: Oh! *Sath*, *Asath*, did you say? When these two words are added, we get *Sadasath*, isn’t it? This is what is spoken of by us as *Maya*, do you know?

Bhaktha: Is that *Maya* similar to magic?

Swami: Is it not? “*Indrajalam idam Sarvam*”; all this is the magician’s work. That is what the Rishis have been saying since ages.

Bhaktha: Then, there must be a performer of all this *Indrajala*, isn’t it?

Swami: Certainly, there is. That magician is God. He is endowed with countless auspicious attributes. The Maharshis have formed a name on the basis of each attribute and a form on the basis of each name and attained Realisation meditating on those forms, making the Attributeless Attributeful and the Formless Formful? Is it not their experience that is being proclaimed through a thousand tongues? In the Sastras, Vedas and the Upanishads have they not declared how they have realised God in their Dhyana Samadhi, each in his own way, according to his attitude and devotion and worship; how each has been blessed with the Vision of the Lord and the actual consummation of Union with him?

Bhaktha: Yes Swami! I have understood that. But you said that name and form are based on attributes. Kindly explain this to me.

Swami: Certainly. We must now pay attention to such important topics only because the others are beyond your powers of imagination. Listen carefully. Since the Lord pleases all, He is known as Rama. So also He is *Premaswaroopa*, the embodiment of Love. He is *Bhaktavatsala*, full of affection to His devotees. He is *Krupasagara*, Ocean of Mercy. In each such name and form, He has vouchsafed *Sakshathkaara* (Direct perception of God) to Bhakthas and blessed them with *Sayujya* (Merger in the Divine). The Formless God assumes all forms in order to bless Bhakthas.

Bhaktha: I am happy. I am indeed so happy, Swami! Through Your Grace, I am understanding quite clearly. Just one doubt: The Formless Paramathma, you said, has countless names. Are all names and forms equal? Is there any difference?

Swami: What a question! All names and forms are certainly equal. Whatever name and form are worshipped, the Lord is of that Unique Real *swaropa* (Embodiment) only. It is possible to realise Him through that name and form. But the Bhaktha should pay attention to one matter. In whichever form the Lord is worshipped, the favour prayed for the purpose must be one.

Bhaktha: What type of purpose, Swami?

Swami: *Mumukshuthwam*. Desire for Liberation. The Lord alone should be loved, nothing else. Love That. Meditate on That. That should be concretised. Finally, resolve that you be merged in That. That type of acute desire alone one should have.

Bhaktha: True, Swami! I have understood well. As you said, I have heard many stories from the *Bhagavatha* and the *Ramayana* of people who asked the Lord all kinds of favours and brought about their own ruin. Hiranyaksha, Ravana and Bhasmasura and others are remembered for their ways from that day to this. You have said it clearly. It is something which Bhakthas should carefully consider.

Swami: Well! There is no use simply nodding the head for everything, relishing them as “true,” “true.” If it is firmly fixed in your heart that this is true and this is good, thereafter it is necessary to put it into practice. If you say that it is true so long as I speak and forget when you go away, this listening itself is useless. The food that is eaten is to remove hunger, not for being kept on the tongue, away from the stomach. Then hunger will start again. So also, hearing and not acting accordingly, is useless.

Bhaktha: So far, you have told some important things, (1) The External World (2) The Internal World (3) Bhagawan, the Lord. Are these then separate entities, like cause and effect? Or are they connected one with the other?

Swami: Think about it yourself! For this I have already sent the reply in *Prema Vahini*. It must have reached you today itself. Look into that. Look closely at what is said there of the relationship between “he that serves,” “he that is served,” and “the wherewithal of Service.”

Bhaktha: Swami, You said also Ksharam Aksharam; Nithyam Anithyam. Are there any other names too?

Swami: These two are known as *Purusha* (God or the Supreme Being) also. They are said to be *Chethana* (super consciousness) and *Achethana*

(nonconsciousness). They are referred to as *Jiva* (“I” consciousness, individual) and *Jada* (Insentient, inert) also. The *Kshara Akshara Purushas* are named in another context as *Para* (higher) and *Apara* (lower)-*prakritis* (nature, sensory world). If you contemplate with a clear intelligence you will find that only names change. The Thing does not change.

Bhaktha: Then, Swami, just as Kshara Akshara have as synonym Purushas, has Bhagawantha, the Lord, any such synonym?

Swami: Why? Bhagawan is well known by the very appropriate name, *Purushotthama*, since He is the Highest of the Purushas.

Bhaktha: Oh! How sweet! What a sweet name! Did the Purushas originate from the Purushotthama?

Swami: Here comes the big problem. Once before also you asked, did it *originate*? We must use correct words. Otherwise, we get wrong meanings. We should not say, “originating” from Purushotthama. In Him they shine. I told you before that these Purushas are indicated by the words, Para-Apara Prakriti, Jiva-Jada. This word Prakriti gives the sense of *Swabhava* (nature, reality) and *Sakthi* (divine energy), isn’t it?

Bhaktha: It does. I understand Purushotthama is one, His Prakriti is the second.

Swami: No. You are mistaken. Think again. Is there any difference between a thing and its nature? Is it possible to separate and see the nature apart from the thing? Still, you said “two.”

Bhaktha: 'Tis a mistake, Swami. It is wrong. No one can separate them. The two are one.

Swami: In current speech we say: sugar is sweet, the sun gives light, it is hot, etc. Sweetness is in sugar, light is in the Sun. They are not separate; they are one. Sweetness cannot be known unless sugar is placed on the tongue. Without seeing the sun, light and heat cannot be known. Thus, Bhagawan has two characteristics; when we speak of them as two, they are referred to as *Purusha* and *Prakriti*; but they are really one. Prakriti in the Bhagawan (this is what is known by the name *Mahamaya*) is unmanifested and inseparable, like sweetness in sugar. *Avinabhaavasambandham* means just this relationship. By mere Willing, this Maya envelopes Bhagawan and manifests in the form of Cosmos or *Brahmanda*. This is what is called *Samashti-Viswaroopa*, or Absolute-Full-World-Form. It is this Absolute that expresses itself as Jagath, through the power of *Avidya* (ignorance) according to the Divine Will.

Bhaktha: What is this, Swami? It was all so clear so far, but this word Avidya newly used has upset my train of thought! I didn't understand anything. Please explain.

Swami: Don't be in a hurry! Have you heard the word Vidya? Do you know its meaning?

Bhaktha: Certainly. Vidya means study!

Swami: *Vidya* means knowledge, *Jnana*. When “A” is added, it becomes Ajnana, Ignorance. Though one, Ignorance takes multifarious forms.

Bhaktha: Yes, Swami. How did this Avidya come about? Where did it come from?

Swami: You know, don't you, of light and darkness. Do they both exist at the same time?

Bhaktha: There can be no darkness when there is light nor light when there is darkness.

Swami: When there is light, where does darkness exist? When there is darkness, where does light exist? Think well.

Bhaktha: This subject is very difficult, Swami! Still, I shall reply as best as I can. Pardon me if I am wrong. Darkness must be in light; light must be in darkness; how else can it be?

Swami: I will ask another small question. Answer me. This light and this darkness; are they independent, or are they dependent on anything else?

Bhaktha: They are dependent on the Sun. When the Sun rises, it is light. When the Sun sets, it is darkness.

Swami: Well, my boy, Vidya and Avidya are dependent on Bhagawan. Vidya has another name, “*Chith.*” I shall describe to you all that, if you come next month. This is enough for today. Go and come. If all is eaten at the same time, it won’t be digested. It would lead to bad health. What we have heard, what we have eaten, requires time to get digested and assimilated. That is why I have given a month’s interval. If within that time all this is fully digested and practised, I shall tell you the rest gladly. Otherwise, you can imagine what that day would be like.

Bhaktha: Namaskaram. I am indeed blessed. To digest what is heard, and what is eaten—the power to do this should be vouchsafed by You alone. When everything is the Lord’s, how can this alone be ours? But I shall use the power and knowledge You have endowed me with, as much as possible, without any waste. Beyond that, it is all my Destiny and Your Grace. I shall take leave with your permission.

Swami: Placing your burden on Destiny and keeping quiet means diminution of effort. With effort and prayer, Destiny can be attained. Without effort and prayer, Destiny and Grace are not gained. Start the effort! Well, my boy, go and come gladly again.

IV

SWAMI: Oh, You have come! I was watching for long whether you have come or not. I knew you are a person who comes punctually. Glad to see you.

Bhaktha: Whatever else I may disregard, will I disregard Your command, Swami? In fact, I am eagerly looking forward to the sixteenth of every month to meet you. What greater happiness can I get? What better food can I take?

Swami: Very good! Such *Sraddha* (steady faith) and *Bhakthi* (devotion) are great helps in Man's true Path. Better than losing sleep and rejecting food in the fruitless pursuit of evanescent worldly pursuits, how much more joyful it is to attain the true, the meaningful and the holy goal! Leave that aside now. What do you want now? Speak, let me see.

Bhaktha: Swami, last month You said something about "Chith" (awareness) and You were pleased to say that You will explain more about it this month. Since then, I have been counting the passing days in order that I may know about it from You. The day has come at last. Please tell me about it.

Swami: Have you understood what has been told so far? Understanding does not mean mere mugging up! By practice and experience, have you realised in thought, word and deed, and with full equanimity, the true nature of the World, that the World is Unreal?

Bhaktha: It is only by understanding that, isn't it, Swami, that one can ever be immersed in thoughts of Sai, the Lord, giving up all other activities and duties? Had I not understood that much, I would have wasted this precious time.

Swami: Good, my dear boy! How sad will the ryot be if the seeds he has planted do not sprout and yield harvest! So too, if the seeds of True wisdom that I sow do not come up as good saplings and give good harvest, I too am affected. On the other hand, if they grow well and fructify into a harvest of Ananda, how happy I would be. That is My food. This is the *Seva* (service) you should do to me. There is nothing higher than this. Without flinging away the good words and true, spoken for your sake, if you practise them and derive joy therefrom, the essence of that joy is my

food. If you thus act according to My words and put them into practice, I will gladly tell you more, whatever may be the number of the things you ask. When what is said is allowed to deteriorate without being put into use, if people come and ask me to speak and speak again, what is to be said? If all start practising as you are doing, the world will not have any troubles. Untruth will not manifest itself.

Bhaktha: Swami! To practise the Divine Words too the Lord's Grace is the basic need just as for everything else. Without that, nothing can happen. It is ever-present, as You said. Just as the Sun is hidden by fog, Grace can be obstructed by the darkness of "I" and "mine." But these can be overcome by practice and discipline. That is why if we understand well the meaning of what we hear and follow, it is so easy. This is my experience; I do not know of others.

Swami: True. True. What you say is correct. You have understood it well. Without grasping the meaning, if various interpretations are given, that distorts Reality. And if a wrong sense is imputed, it falsifies Reality. But if it is clearly understood, practice becomes easy. Now consider this. Are all born at the same time? Do all die at the same time? Similarly, the highest Wisdom will dawn, in this person or that, at different times. If you go on singing, song after song, you learn music. So also, if I speak and continue speaking, all will

understand the Reality. It is not my mission to keep silent because people are not understanding. To such, it must be communicated once, twice and more times if necessary.

Bhaktha: Swami, we are like lumps of iron; the Lord is like the magnet. Both are related to each other. But if that lump of iron has to be changed into an article of use in God's hands, it has to be heated in the fire of anxiety and beaten by the hammer of pain, so that it may obey and respond. So in order to shape lumps of iron like us into instruments, You have to take much trouble. You have said that this is Your Mission. Now please tell me about the "Chith" which you mentioned last month.

Swami: Yes. "Chith" has also another name, *Suddha Sathwa*; i.e., Pure Consciousness. It is as opposed to the Impure Consciousness as Vidya is to Avidya. Impure consciousness is inherent in the Pure, as much as Darkness is inherent in Light. Since many words are spoken, don't get confused my dear boy! Vidya-Avidya, Jnana-Ajnana, *Suddha Sathwa-Malina Sathwa* (impure consciousness), all indicate the same idea, not different ones. I shall ask you another question. Have you heard the word, the opposite of "Prakriti"?

Bhaktha: I have heard the word, Swami. When I studied grammar, I learnt that the opposite of Prakriti is "*Vikriti*."

Swami: What does Vikriti mean?

Bhaktha: Vikriti means *Vikaaram*, changed, transformed, derived. *Agni* is the original; *Aggi* is the derived word. So, too, *Jama* is derived from *Yama*, *Janna* from *Yajna*, and so on.

Swami: So also, the Lord's Prakriti is known as Vidya, and its derived or lower form or Vikriti is known as Avidya. For Vidya or Suddha Sathwa, Avidya or Malina Sathwa is the lower form.

Bhaktha: How is that, Swami? Vidya is effulgent in the Lord and Avidya is apparent only because of Vidya. That is to say, the Universal Cosmic Principle is in the Lord, and this Universal Principle itself appears as individual different from individual (by the external characteristics of name and form, the appearance of individuals is caused). This *Avidyasakthi* or the power of Ignorance also manifests as an inseparable entity. For, the Lord is the only Existence. Therefore, that One Existence is the Basis or Foundation for the Universal and the Particular, the Totality as well as the apparent Parts. This is Your meaning, isn't it, Swami?

Swami: That is why the Lord is referred to as *Sathya* (Truth) and Brahman. This Sathyam is *Akhanda* or Indivisible. It is *Adwaita*, Non-dual. It is *Anantha*, without End. In the Upanishads, this Sathya (associated with the unmanifested Maya Sakthi) is called the *Purna*,

“*Adah*” and the Sathya associated with the manifested Maya Sakthi is called the *Purna*, “*Idam*”. This is the secret of the Upanishadic Manthra, *Purnamadah Purnamidam*....

Bhaktha: Oh, what fine teaching! Just like giving unto the hand a fruit peeled and ready to eat! This manifested total cosmos or Purna arose out of the Purna of Unmanifested Indivisible Reality, this is what you spoke of, is it not?

Swami: It is on account of this that we say *Vasudevasarvamidam*, *Sarvamkhalvidam Brahma*, etc. The words Vasudeva, Brahma are different but there is no difference in meaning at all. Did you understand?

Bhaktha: It is all like nectar, Swami. But so far you have not told me, who I am?

Swami: This is enough now. Next month I shall solve your doubts, with illustrative examples. Grasp well what has been told. Practise, don't forget and lay aside. Meditate on it. Well, you can take leave now.